



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH

CHAMBERS OF
BARBARA M. QUINN, JUDGE
CHIEF COURT ADMINISTRATOR

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Testimony of the Honorable Barbara M. Quinn
Chief Court Administrator
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
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House Bill 5540, An Act Concerning the Compensation of Judges, Family Support Magistrates, Family Support Referees and Judge Trial Referees

Good morning, Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, Senator Kissel, Representative O'Neill and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Barbara M. Quinn, and I am the Chief Court Administrator. I appear before you today to testify in strong support of ***House Bill 5540, An Act Concerning the Compensation of Judges, Family Support Magistrates, Family Support Referees and Judge Trial Referees***. Thank you for raising this bill.

I want to be clear that I am not here today seeking an increase in judges' compensation. We are fully aware of the budget crisis that the State of Connecticut faces. In fact, the Judicial Branch's budget has been reduced by \$30 million in fiscal year 2010 and by more than \$17 million in fiscal year 2009. And, we continue to prepare for the possibility of further reductions in our budget. In this climate, I would never come before you seeking a pay raise for judges.

As you know, a statutory change is necessary each and every time an increase in compensation is granted for judges. The bill sets forth a mechanism by which increases in the salaries of judge and family support magistrates and in the per diem rates paid to senior judges, judge trial referees and family support referees are linked to the average increase in compensation afforded to Executive Branch managers.

Under this mechanism, judges and family support magistrates would receive an increase in their compensation, if, and only if, Executive Branch managers had received an increase during the previous fiscal year. The amount of the increase would be the same percentage increase as that received by the managers. As it is readily apparent that Executive Branch managers will not see an increase in their salary for the foreseeable future, under this proposal, our judges won't either.

This mechanism was recommended by the *Commission on Compensation of Elected State Officers and Judges* in its last three reports. Its benefit is that linking

increases in judges' compensation to the annual percentage that Executive Branch managers receive would ensure that the judges receive the same equitable pay arrangement as others in state government, and it would also bring much needed predictability to the state's budgeting process.

I should mention that the last time the judges received an increase was in January of 2007, and the last time that the General Assembly approved raises for judges was back in 2004. I also wanted to bring to your attention that the salaries of Connecticut judges lag significantly behind the salaries of judges in other states. According to the National Center for State Courts' *2009 Court's Survey of Judicial Salaries*, Connecticut judges rank 40th in terms of salary. The salaries of the judges have dropped significantly in just two years. According to the same report released in 2007, Connecticut judges ranked 33rd.

I also wanted to bring to your attention our recommendation to delete the new language in lines 58 and 59.

In conclusion, we believe that passage of this bill would address the structural shortcomings of the current system for awarding compensation, while not actually granting a pay raise in these difficult financial times. Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.